

Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-Uthmani's Comprehensive Reply to the Objectors of Taqlid

It is known from the practice of Umar that he would, when anyone narrated to him [something] that he did not recognise from the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace), say to him: "Do you have with you one who will corroborate you? If not I will punish you." Al-Dhahabi said: "In this is evidence that when a report is narrated by two trustworthy narrators, it is stronger and weightier than what one [narrator] is alone in [narrating]. In this is encouragement of multiplying the paths of hadith, in order that it rises from the degree of uncertainty to the degree of certainty, since one [narrator] may have forgotten or erred, and that is nearly impossible for two trustworthy [narrators] that none opposes." (Tadhkirat al-Huffaz 1:6)

I say: Hence, there is no reason therefore to say that Abu Hanifah performed Qiyas excessively in his madhab only because he was present at a time before the codification of hadith, and had he lived till [the period when] the hadiths of the Shariah were codified, and after the huffaz travelled to collect them from the cities and borders, and he obtained them, he would have accepted them and abandoned every analogy he made, because we say: Had the Imam obtained them, he would not accept from them except what was widespread in the time of the four caliphs, and all that was widespread of hadith in their time, none of it escaped him, as he had encompassed the knowledge of Hijaz and Medina and the Iraqis, proven by the great number of his teachers, and his being the most learned of people in his time by the testimony of the Imams* as was previously mentioned; and all exceptions are anomalous (shadhdh) or from that which is not obligatory to act upon.

If we conceded that some hadiths which must be acted upon in the Shari'ah were hidden to him, we say: Muhammad, Abu Yusuf, Zufar ibn al-Hudhayl, Ibn al-Mubarak, al-Hasan ibn Ziyad and others of his companions lived until the time hadith was codified; and then al-Tahawi, al-Karkhi, al-Hakim the author of al-Kafi, Abd al-Baqi ibn Qani, al-Mustaghfiri, Ibn al-Sharqi, al-Zaylai and others from the huffaz of the Hanafis and the critics of hadith from them came later after there had been complete scrutiny of prophetic hadith; and they comprehended its authentic and its weak [reports], and its well-known and its singular [reports].

Hence, every analogy from the analogies of Abu Hanifah which he held in opposition to hadith, his companions like Muhammad, Abu Yusuf, Zufar and al-Hasan left it, and they disagreed with their teacher in half of his madhab, and the madhab of the Hanafis is the sum of the opinions of the Imam, and these disciples of his. Then the hadith-scholars of the Hanafis after them gave preference in some issues to the opinion of al-Shafi'i, and in some of them to the opinion of Malik, and in some of them to the opinion of Ahmad, and they issued fatwa according to what was preponderant according to them based on the evidence; and all of this is the madhab of Abu Hanifah, due to it being consistent with his method and his principles on which he premised his madhab, from which is his preference of [scriptural] text even if weak over analogy. So there does not remain, and all praise is to Allah, in our madhab an opinion contrary to hadith except we have with us another hadith supporting us, and that which we apparently oppose, it has with us an interpretation which we do not oppose; and all the Imams and their companions would do likewise. No one can claim to act on all hadiths in their entirety, and all only act on some of them and leave some of them, either because it is weak according to them or contrary to the text [of the Qur'an] or well-known or mass-transmitted report, or due to it being anomalous or defective or abrogated or interpreted according

to a meaning most people have not comprehended, and the like of this.

As for those who condemn taqlid, it is not possible for them to act on hadith according to their principle at all, because acting on it is not possible except by imitating some of the ulama in that “this hadith is sahih,” and “this is da’if,” and “this is obligatory to act upon,” and “this is not obligatory to act upon, but it is permissible or desirable or impermissible to adopt,” and this, as you see, is all taqlid in rulings, since a hadith being obligatory to adopt or vice versa, or impermissible to adopt or vice versa, is definitely from the rulings. This is why the jurists mentioned the discussion of the Sunnah, its acceptance and its rejection, its adoption and its abandonment, and the rulings of the narrators in [the books of] jurisprudence and its principles, due it being from the subject of laws. These people reject taqlid, Qiyas and ijтиhad completely in rulings, so why do they do taqlid of the hadith-scholars in this? And why do they make their opinion and their ijтиhad in authenticating hadiths and weakening them a proof?**

And we have already explained many times that the authenticity and weakness of a hadith, and the trustworthiness and weakness of a narrator, all depend on the taste of a hadith-scholar, his opinion and his judgement. This is why ijтиhad developed amongst them in this; thus, one weakens a hadith and another authenticates it, and one weakens a man and another declares him trustworthy. This is nothing besides differences in opinion. So understand, and do not haste in rejecting a reliable Imam to whose eminence the ummah have bowed, and whose greatness and excellence the imams have recognised. Allah has charge of your guidance.

-The above is a translated essay extracted from Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-Uthmani’s Qawa'id fi Ulum al-Hadith, part of the general introduction to I'lā al-Sunan. (A 20 volume compendium of the Hadith proofs for the Hanafi Madhab. For some information regarding this magnificent work see [here](#))